

Preparing Graduate Students to be Outreach Family Life Educators

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ABSTRACT. Upon graduation, many family science graduate students will have opportunities to work with lay audiences in educational settings outside the traditional university and high school classroom. To succeed in educating lay audiences requires a somewhat different skill set than that which students currently gain in many family science programs. Thus, for graduates in family life education to succeed well in educating the public requires different skills than teaching students in traditional classroom settings. This article reports the development, implementation, and evaluation of a course, called The Outreach Class, as an example of what family science graduate programs can do to assure that students gain the skills they need. Evaluation data show the course is experienced as a positive, hands-on learning experience. It is suggested that through a course like this, students gain practical educational experiences that arm them to become more effective ambassadors of family science scholarship to citizens of the world.

Upon graduation, many family science graduate students will have opportunities to work with lay audiences in educational settings outside the traditional university and high school classroom. Some may be involved in field agent or campus-based specialist work within the Cooperative Extension System. Others may work as family outreach experts in human service or media contexts. Those with an entrepreneurial spirit may develop their own family life education business. Still other students may assume traditional university positions that include some outreach expectations.

To succeed in educating lay audiences requires a somewhat different skill set than that which students currently gain in many family science programs, even those that have family life education emphases. For example, although the author was trained by leading family life education mentors, he still found himself somewhat ill-prepared for the nature of family life education in outreach settings. The needs and motivations of the general public in outreach family life education settings usually differ from the traditional family science college students, who are likely more concerned with earning an acceptable grade than benefit for their personal life. The general public involvement in a family life education offering is more likely to be motivated by a personal or family need (e.g., see Knowles, 1990). Thus, for students of family life education to succeed well in educating the public requires a somewhat different skill set than teaching students held captive in traditional classroom settings (Duncan & Goddard, 2005). Students need practical, educational experiences in their college curriculum that arm students to become more effective ambassadors of family science scholarship to citizens of the world.

This article presents information about a professional preparation course, Outreach Family Life Education (hereafter termed “The Outreach Class”), as a prototype of what could be done to address this need through university family life education curricula. The broad goal of this

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course is to help graduate students develop the knowledge and skills needed to take family science principles to citizens where they live and work.

After defining outreach family life education, this article provides details on course development, readings, course objectives, learning activities to accomplish objectives, topics, implementation, and formative student evaluations of The Outreach Class. It is hoped these ideas will be helpful to others who wish to enhance the professional training budding outreach family life education receive during their academic programs.

Defining Outreach Family Life Education

Much effort has been expended to define family life education, with definitions dating back over 40 years (Arcus, Schvaneveldt, & Moss, 1993). Overall there has been little consensus reached on a specific definition, and greater consensus reached on aims or principles underlying family life education (Arcus et al., 1993). Moreover, no published attempt has been made either distinguish implementation of or training for family life education taking place in high school and college settings from family life education taking place outside these environments, which can be termed “outreach.”

Outreach family life education can be defined as “any educational activity occurring outside a traditional school classroom setting, usually involving adults, that is designed to strengthen relationships in the home and foster positive individual, couple, and family development” (Duncan & Goddard, 2005). Such education comprises many topics, from marriage education to parenting skills, from stress and anger management to strategies for adapting following divorce. In fact, it is any form of education that has as its goal to strengthen and enrich individual and family well-being (Arcus et al., 1993, p. 21) and falls within any of the ten content areas of family life education set forth by the National Council on Family Relations (Bredehoft & Cassidy, 1995), save that it assumes that the audience may never have or will darken the doorway of a traditional classroom. Venues include essentially any setting other than the captive educational classroom. This working definition of outreach family life education was used as a starting point for course development, explained next.

Course Development

The Outreach Class endeavors to provide a comprehensive response to the following need: There is knowledge and skills that outreach family life education professionals need to be most helpful and effective in work with the general public. To arrive at the response, the author generated a course outline that represented his collected experience over 12 years as a family life specialist within Cooperative Extension at two universities. He then sent the outline to three nationally-recognized extension family life specialists, asking if they agreed that such a course was needed as well as requesting their feedback and input into the outline. After confirming that the need was great and incorporating their ideas, the author sent the outline to the Cooperative Extension System’s national program leader in family life, whom also provided feedback and consented to send out the outline out nationally via the FAMNET listserv to other family life specialists and related professionals. Four additional extension specialists responded to this national request for feedback, reacting very favorably to the outline of the course and providing helpful feedback. Assisted by a course development grant from the university, the author

designed The Outreach Class in the fall of 2001. The course was first taught as a senior undergraduate/graduate student offering during the winter of 2002.

Course Text

At the time the course was designed and first taught, The Outreach Class did not have a text, for no text was located that addressed fully the topics identified. Instead, students were exposed to select readings for the course, as well as in-class handouts based on a synthesis of experiences of outreach professionals that fill gaps currently left by the academic literature. Since then, the author and a colleague have completed and published a text for this course and others like it (Duncan & Goddard, 2005). Since the text was specifically developed for this course, the text is organized directly by course topic. In the text, we try to incorporate the leading outreach family life education scholarship with our lived professional experiences as Cooperative Extension specialists in four states, and also drew on the experiences of colleagues across the country.

Course Content and Student Objectives

To accomplish the broad goal of helping students build knowledge and skills needed as a family life outreach professional, the following nine student objectives have been selected. Students will:

- review the philosophical underpinnings of outreach family life education and develop their own philosophy
- learn a framework for organizing comprehensive prevention programs in family life education
- develop a literature review of scholarship and outreach family life education practice on a chosen topic, from which to generate educational materials
- critically analyze several examples of existing outreach family life education resources
- learn principles and methods for reaching out to the lay audience, including workshop teaching, writing for print media and other lay publication outlets, Internet technology, radio, and television
- learn principles and practices for reaching diverse audiences, especially limited resource and at-risk audiences
- learn principles and strategies for multiplying their reach through collaborative partnerships and social marketing
- learn principles and methods for evaluating outreach family life education programs
- design a comprehensive outreach family life education program portfolio based on scholarly literature and best practices

Following a collaborative approach to learning in family life education (Duncan & Goddard, 2005), students are also invited at the first class meeting to build additional objectives into the course so that it better fits their professional needs. The students are asked, “Are there any objectives you believe I should add to the course so that it better meets your professional needs?”

Accomplishing the Objectives

Several learning activities have been designed to help students accomplish these objectives: *Reading, class discussion, and application of readings*. The course follows a read/discuss/do approach to learning. Readings for the class are included as Appendix 1. We spend class time identifying principles for practice and then engage in hands-on outreach activities as we apply

the principles. For example, after discussing readings on models for teaching the lay audience in workshop contexts, students team up to develop a brief instructional module incorporating these perspectives.

Philosophy of outreach family life education. This assignment is a short paper (3-5 pages) where students integrate relevant readings and class materials and articulate their personal philosophy as a basis for family life outreach practice. On its due date, students lead a 10-15 minute discussion of their philosophy.

Critique of existing outreach program. Using an adaptation of the review form provided by Hughes (1994; 1997), students critically review one comprehensive outreach program. The author has been collecting numerous outreach program curricula available commercially and through the Cooperative Extension System, and making these programs available for review through Course Reserve at the university's library. Students review the materials for its theoretical and research base, instructional and implementation processes, evaluation processes, and overall quality. On its due date, students share their reviews during class discussion on "What are the elements of quality outreach FLE resources?"

Scholarship and practice literature review. As a basis for their outreach program, students do an extensive review of the scholarly literature on a selected topic, including a critique and synthesis, as well as what efforts have been made to take this scholarship to the lay audience. The topic could be any marriage, family, or human development topic that would be of interest to the general public. The scholarly review portion emphasizes the *teachable* ideas, those ideas from theory and research that are important for the lay audience to know. The practice review highlights programs and methods that have been used in outreach on the subject. Students are encouraged to select a topic that interests them and about which they have already been reading and studying, such as one related to their thesis.

Outreach family life education program portfolio. Over the course of the semester, students gradually design a comprehensive outreach program portfolio. The materials receive peer and instructor feedback before it is finalized. The portfolio consists of the following components:

- One session of a multiple-session (up to six) workshop series (two-hours of instruction with refreshment break, plus an outline of the remaining sessions)
- Manuscript for a magazine or Web site (1500-2000 words)
- Manuscript for newspaper article (500-800 words)
- Mock interview for television (5-8 minute, videotaped)
- Mock interview for radio (8-10 minute; audio taped)
- Radio spot (:45 to one-minute; audio taped)
- Evaluation plan and sample instruments (formative and summative)
- Plans for marketing, reaching diverse audiences, and collaboration

Students turn in a component at a time as well as the program portfolio as a whole to receive feedback from both the instructor and class peers, and have the opportunity to make revisions of the material as appropriate. All class instruction and assignments are focused toward this ultimate product. Several examples of materials are made available as "Prime Example" models in the Resource Room.

Portfolio presentation. On the final day of class, students deliver to their class colleagues a 30-minute presentation on their portfolio. Students are free to organize this presentation any way they wish, but they are instructed to assume a professional outreach audience, such as would be found at a national conference or during a job interview. Thus students are encouraged to showcase their personal strengths as well as the strengths of the material they have developed, as

well as acknowledging areas still needing improvement. Students receive written feedback from their peers and the instructor on the class presentation. Students are also encouraged to present their materials to a community group comprised of the target audience.

Content and Flow of Instruction

The Outreach Class is semester length (14 weeks) and organized around 13 topical areas. Below are discussed the topics, instructional approach, and assignments.

Topic #1: Foundations and philosophies for outreach family life education. The objective of this section is for students to review the beginnings and philosophical underpinnings of outreach family life education and develop their own philosophy of family life education. We begin with a historical overview of family life education in outreach settings, and spend significant time reviewing some of the current thinking about the role of family outreach professionals as they attempt to take family science principles to where citizens live and work. For example, some debate has ensued over the role of university-based scientific research in strengthening marriages and families, and how that information can best be utilized by communities. We review the historical “trickle-down” approach and contrast it with the community-collaborative approach argued for by other scholars (Doherty, 2001; Lerner, 1995), and how family science scholarship can be integrated with the lived experience of the lay learners. We then discuss the various roles a family life outreach educator may play in communities, from an “expert” to “collaborator” to a “facilitator,” and how certain roles may be useful in varied circumstances.

Next, we discuss elements pertinent to the development of a philosophy of outreach family life education (Dail, 1984; White, 1987; Powell & Cassidy, 2001). For example, questions such as, “What assumptions do you make about humans, the learning process, content, and the nature and quality of family life” are addressed. At the end of this section, students craft a personal philosophy of outreach family life education, integrating the various perspectives presented in the materials and class.

Topic #2. Designing comprehensive prevention programs. During this section, students learn an integrated framework for guiding outreach family life education, that incorporates prevention science (Coie et al., 1993; Dumka, Roosa, Michaels, & Suh, 1995), risk and resiliency (Rutter, 1987; Werner, 1990), and ecological systems theory (Bogenschneider, 1996). This integrative framework includes the following broad stages: Problem analysis, program design, pilot testing, advance testing, and dissemination. Found within each category are many other subprocesses. For example, during the problem analysis stage, outreach professionals would be engaged in defining the problem or goal, identifying risk and protective factors, assessing accessibility of the target group, and forming a coalition of stakeholders who work together to address the problem. At the end of this section, students identify a topic and create a rough outline of the processes they would follow in putting together a program, particularly during the early stages, based on the principles and practices articulated in class from the readings.

Topic #3: Elements of family life education resources and programs. This section of the course provides students the opportunity to learn the numerous elements of quality outreach family life education resources (Hughes, 1994; 1997) and then, armed with that understanding, critically analyze several examples of such resources. For this class, the focus is on program curricula, but could extend to a critique of numerous other FLE resources. There are probably thousands of outreach family life education curricula. However, these materials are of varying quality, not always following high program development standards (Hughes, 1994). We discuss

widely accepted elements of quality family life education program curricula. Some of these elements include a strong theory/research base, clear goals and objectives, methods consistent with objectives, attention to diverse audiences, a guide for implementation, and evaluation tools tied to the objectives. In the context of this discussion, we evaluate some of the most widely known outreach family life education programs against these elements, to see how they measure up. In addition to program curricula elements, we discuss elements of strong, sustainable programs that transcend program curricula design and some programs that model these elements (Lee, Mancini, Miles, & Marek, 1996).

To apply these ideas, students select a curriculum found in the collection of resources in Course Reserve in the university library to evaluate and report on in class. The review form is adapted from Hughes (1994; 1997). This review form is also turned into a personal checklist for assessing the quality of one's own curricula they are developing as part of their portfolio.

At the end of this section, students create a vision statement for their program, list goals and objectives for their program, and draft an evaluation plan outline.

Topic #4: Principles of program evaluation. Students learn principles and methods for evaluating outreach family life education programs. Evaluation is a process that must be incorporated into every element of family life education, so we discuss it early. We begin by comparing and contrasting views of evaluation, from a forum by which we are judged and by which a program justifies its existence, to more positive views: evaluation is a way to improve our efforts and serve clientele better. We then discuss seven activities important in program evaluation, illustrated with family life program examples: Begin with a program vision (e.g. How will my community be different because of my program); identify evaluation goals and objectives (e.g., Is the evaluation to measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, or a combination); select or develop outcome measures (e.g., What items are needed to address the objectives?); decide what data you will collect and how you will collect it (e.g., Will you collect formative and summative, quantitative and qualitative data? Will you collect the data by survey, interview, or online?); choose an evaluation design that is appropriate to the developmental level of the program (e.g., Is the program at the pre-implementation, utilization, or some other program level? Is the program ready for a sophisticated impact analysis using an experimental design?); analyze the data (e.g., What kind of qualitative and quantitative analyses need to be done?); and write the report (e.g., Who is the audience of my report? Stakeholders? Program funders? Scientists?).

Topic # 5: Designing effective instruction. While it may not be necessary for students to understand every principle of instructional science, they are far more likely to be effective as outreach family life educators if they have a working knowledge of instructional design principles. These principles are important in any outreach education setting, from workshop teaching to writing an article for a web site. During this section of the course, students learn several approaches for designing effective learning experiences. The major model from traditional instructional science discussed is Merrill's Component Display Theory (Merrill, 1983; 1994). We also discuss approaches specifically developed for family life education, including "Form" (Moss & Olson, 1983) and "Principles" (Burr, 1977) approaches. Transformative learning (Clark, 1993) approaches, derived from critical-emancipatory perspectives in adult education, are also included. Each perspective is demonstrated separately and students are also encouraged to integrate them. Students complete activities during class that require them to identify a teaching topic and, using at least two of the frameworks, create and teach from an instructional outline.

Topic #6: Engaging an audience. A central theme during this section is that humans are relational beings, and that therefore humans learn best in the context of caring, compassionate, relational teaching. Details about creating supportive, caring environments as a prelude to transformative learning is shared, which contexts transcend instructional design. For example, an important prelude to the kind of engagement that creates meaningful change in participants is “joining” with those in the instructional setting (Hanna & Brown, 2004), where the participants perceive the family life educator as an empathic caring partner in helping them identify and build their personal and family strengths toward accomplishment of their goals. These are attributes that help promote transformative learning (Clark, 1993), and we spend time visiting about additional attributes in this perspective, such as authentic, sincere, high integrity instructors who foster a high degree of trust and openness. With this as prelude, we then discuss the teaching processes embodied in the work of parenting educator Haim Ginott (Orgel, 1980) that leads audiences to make meaningful emotional connections in their relationships. These include recitation (where audiences are encouraged to talk about their challenging experiences as parents, couples, etc.), sensitization (participants are directed toward understanding of others’ feelings), learning of new principles, and practice of new skills. Students are invited to explore their own strengths as family life educators, and have opportunity to practice engagement approaches in mock workshop settings in class as well as apply the ideas to print.

Topic #7: Teaching in outreach family life education: Mechanics and methods. This section of the course builds upon topics 5 and 6. With a context of caring and instructional design in place, the course turns the student’s attention to the mechanics and methods of outreach family life education. We first discuss how one decides what to teach a public audience. For example, what is the appropriate blend of scholarship, moral thinking, and lived experience? How will the experience of community members be integrated with theory/research-based instruction provided by the outreach educator? This material is followed by a discussion on how to create learner-centered goals and objectives that are specific and measurable. Finally we discuss a selection of numerous methods that are especially suitable for family life education and provide examples of their use. These methods include fishbowl, family council, personal narrative, role play, skill training, literature (books, plays, movie clips), music, myth versus reality, and others.

At the end of this portion of the course, students complete activities that build upon those of the sections. That is, in addition to the teaching topic and instructional design, they now add goals, objectives, and methods.

Topic #8: Working with the media. Effective outreach family life education is more than good workshop teaching. In this section of the course we discuss principles and practices for disseminating family science educational information through newspapers, television, and radio. First, we present guidelines for presenting family life information in media settings. For example, outreach family life educators must be careful to state the basis of an idea (e.g., according to one theory, children learn best when...). Next we discuss principles for developing positive professional relationships with the media, so that we are viewed as assets to them and they seek us out for information. Next we include guidelines and mechanics for developing news releases and newspaper columns, giving television and radio interviews, and crafting radio and television public service announcements (PSAs), including many illustrations for how to translate family science scholarship into usable, practical information for the lay media user.

Students have the opportunity to write a newspaper article following the guidelines in the reading, script a 30 and 60 second radio spot, do a radio interview, and be interviewed “under the lights” for television. To assist in this, we collaborate with broadcast journalism classes on

assignments. Journalism students do mock television and radio interviews of The Outreach Class students. The interviews are recorded in campus television and radio studios and become part of the student's portfolio. Students critique their own and one another's presentations using the principles from class as a guide.

Topic #9: Writing for the lay audience. Much of a student's academic training focuses on teaching them to write in ways that often only their fellow professors can approach comprehending. This mode of writing often inhibits the lay reader from understanding and applying family science ideas. In this section of the course we discuss principles and practices for disseminating family science educational information through lay publications, such as extension bulletins, newsletters, magazines, and web sites. Specifically we discuss the scholarship of effective communication through the written word, and how to translate the Ph.D. language of the professional journals to the simpler, more engaging and useful language of the average reader. While many of the same principles of writing for the lay audience associated with writing newspaper articles apply here, these mediums provide more flexibility and more word space to develop one's points.

During class activities, students complete "translation" of jargon-laden journal-like language into a reader-friendly version that still preserves the meaning of the original. In addition, they are encouraged to write like they speak, or to write by ear, appropriate for a lay audience. One assignment is to write a newspaper column manuscript, following news release format, on a topic of their choice (e.g., Making It as a Single Parent), and then having members of the target audience (e.g., single parents) critique the piece.

Topic #10: Using technology. The Internet and other forms of distance education are revolutionizing the way we disseminate and receive family life educational information. However, its usefulness and impact on family life is yet largely unknown (Steimle & Duncan, 2004). During this section of class, we focus on principles and practices for the use of Internet as a family life educational tool, and how to incorporate good instructional design and the human process (within limits) in this medium. We review what is known about the impact of the internet as a tool for relational growth at home, and principles for using the Web as a family life education tool. Following this discussion, we share guidelines and practices for other common forms of distance education in family life, such as satellite and interactive television, video production, and the educational impact of these technologies.

Students complete an Internet "lab" activity. They select a family life website and do the following: describe the site (using the model suggested by Morgaine, 1992), identify its level of intervention (Doherty, 1995), identify the credentials of the developers and writers and sources of the information, identify mode of delivery (e.g., static or interactive), and usability (how easy is the site to navigate). Students also develop a manuscript for Internet use (1500-2000 words) that takes into account the principles noted in the readings and class work on instructional design and writing for the lay audience.

Topic #11: Working with diverse audiences. Outreach family life education is made more challenging because of the wide variety of audiences who are potential receivers of this education. Family science scholarship is often limited by the nature of the sample which produced the finding. Most of these studies fail to include the diversity of persons represented in the society. In this section of the class, we discuss principles and practices for reaching diverse audiences with family science principles, with special attention to reaching those of limited resources and who are identified as at risk. We first discuss the various sociocultural factors that define the different contexts of family life, including those factors which are indicators of limited

resources (e.g., literacy, education) and risk factors (e.g., subjected to abusive childhood). We then discuss how to respond to participants in ways that reflect understanding and sensitivity to these contexts, from program pre-design to long-term evaluation. We give special experiential emphasis to helping students develop an “anchored understanding of diversity” (Barrera & Corso, 2003).

During the activity portion of the class, students evaluate themselves on how their level of understanding and sensitivity to diversity issues. In addition, they evaluate a program of their own or one of their choosing against several diversity guidelines, and make recommendations for how program design, content, and processes can be adjusted to better follow these guidelines.

Topic #12: Creating effective collaborative partnerships. Wise outreach family life education professionals realize that they cannot do alone what many working together can do better. But how do we go about bringing our contributions to the collaborative table and “synergizing” them with others to effectively and unselfishly serve families in our communities? How do we work effectively with others in addressing family issues? We begin this section by discussing the difficulty of going it alone as we attempt to address complex family issues in our communities. We then present and apply a framework for creating community linkages (ranging from networking to full collaboration), and provide several examples in the family life area that illustrate how this has been and could be done.

As an activity, students select a family life topic reflecting a community need (e.g., better parenting of young children) and create a community linkage plan that pulls together important stakeholders (e.g., parents, preschool teachers, head start representatives), decision makers (e.g., legislators), and agency representatives (e.g. child protective service agencies) to address the topic.

Topic #13: Marketing family life principles, practices, and programs. Family life education in non-captive educational settings suffers from “underwhelming participation” (Bowman & Kieren, 1985). The ones who appreciate the benefits of this education the most remain largely the family life professionals themselves. How can we foster greater application of principles, practices, and participation in programs? Drawing upon the original 4P’s of marketing (product, price, place, promotion) and integrated with additional “Ps” of social marketing (publics, partnership, policy, purse strings), we discuss some practical strategies for answering this question.

For a class activity, students use the integrated “Ps” of marketing to devise a marketing plan to promote their own program.

Student Evaluations of Course

Five graduate students completed The Outreach Course in Winter, 2002 and four completed student ratings of the course and instructor. Students completed quantitative evaluations and also provided open-ended comments about the course and instructor, using a paper-pencil instrument supplied by the university, completed on the final day of the class. Quantitative course items consisted of 10 items on a 7-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Students responded to items such as “Course objectives are clear”, “Course is well organized.” Instructor items were comprised of 14 items using an identical 7-point scale. Sample items include “Instructor has an excellent knowledge of the subject matter,” and “Instructor gives clear examples and explanations.” Overall course and instructor ratings were also provided on a 7-

point scale from 1=very poor to 7=exceptional. Since this article addresses training efficacy, below is reported course data only.

While means for such a small sample are unstable, they are reported here as formative data. Overall, students rated the course as excellent ($M=5.8$). The mean of the means across the 10 items was 6.25, higher than the department course mean (5.75). Thus, overall, the course was rated quite favorably by the students taking the course. Few students wrote open-ended comments. One student called the class a “Great hands-on experience.” Lowest ratings on individual course items were on “Assignments are appropriately distributed throughout the semester (5.5) and “Assigned homework is not just busywork (5.8).” One student stated, “Homework assignments are all appropriate, it was difficult to get to them, with something due basically every week. It was hard to not feel they were ‘busy work’ at times, even though I saw the value of each one.”

An additional evaluation was conducted in winter 2006 using a different instrument required by university. This was the first time the course had been taught using the textbook designed especially for the course and outreach family life education field professionals (Duncan & Goddard, 2005). Seven students took the course and all completed the on-line student evaluation. Similar to the previous evaluation, students completed quantitative items and also provided open-ended comments about the course and instructor. Quantitative course items consisted of 7 items on an 8-point scale ranging from 1=very strongly disagree to 8=very strongly agree. Students responded to items such as “I learned a great deal in this course”, “Course materials and learning activities were effective in helping students learn”, and “This course was well organized.” Four additional questions asked students to indicate how many hours per week they spent in class and out of class doing the relevant class work, and how valuable the in-class and out-of-class time was to them. Instructor items were comprised of 9 items using an identical 8-point scale. Sample items include “The instructor showed genuine interest in students and their learning,” and “The instructor provided opportunities to become actively involved in the learning process.” Overall course and instructor ratings were also provided on an 8-point scale from 1=very poor to 8=exceptional. Below is reported course data only.

Overall, students rated the course as excellent ($M=6.9$, $SD=.69$). This score was higher than the department, college, and university course mean (6.6, 6.2, and 6.3, respectively). The mean of the means across the 7 items was 7.11, higher than the department, college, and university course means (6.67, 6.37, and 6.47, respectively). Students reported that the vast majority of the time spent inside and outside of class was valuable (inside=90%; outside=93%). Thus, overall, the course was experienced quite favorably by the students taking the course. Student comments about the course included the following:

“I really appreciated the hands on and progressive nature (development of my FLE program) of this class. Thank you. The class was so helpful and insightful!”

“An excellent course. Perhaps the most useful course in my PhD program thus far. Class-time and assignments are relevant, useful and engaging.”

“No busy work in this class! I love that we got to submit drafts of everything throughout the semester and that we had the opportunity to do and receive peer review. Very good course design.”

No course criticisms or suggestions for improvement were offered. However, the two items receiving the lowest ratings (7.0 each) were “Evaluations of students’ work (e.g., exams, graded assignments and activities) were good measures of what students learned in the course” and

“This course helped me develop intellectual skills (such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning, integration of knowledge).

Summary and Implications for the Training of Outreach Family Life Educators

The Outreach Course followed a systematic, peer-reviewed approach to course design, created to help the contemporary graduate student in family life education with outreach career aspirations develop the skill set required to be successful with the public. This article described the design, implementation, and evaluation of this new course. Evaluations of the course by the students who have completed it show that it has been a positive learning experience. A singular criticism has been that the course carries a lot of assignments. In response to this comment, one writing assignment of a magazine article has been subsumed into the article for a web site.

To be successful at reaching the public, outreach family life education professionals need a somewhat different set of skills than are needed for working with students within traditional high school and college classrooms. The Outreach Course appears to succeed in its goal to arm students with practical, educational experiences in their college curriculum to become more effective ambassadors of family science scholarship to citizens of the world.

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